

I instantly visualize the John Huston character in Chinatown.

"Do you live in P.A.?" I ask.

Accelerated laughter and dramatic head tossing.

As we are walking from the plane to the terminal, she presses a piece of folded paper into my hand and walks ahead of me.

She walks up to a tall, impressive looking guy with a beard who is no older than she or I and puts her arms around him. Looking at me, he kisses the top of her head, takes her travel bag and escorts her from the terminal.

I unfold the paper she has given me.

Written in large graceful script, is what appears to be a local phone number. Except that there are 8 digits. Beneath the number she has written, "Don't be afraid." And a little Happy Face.

#### ON HERITAGE AND HERESY

i recently submitted some of my writing to  
a professional poet/publisher  
he returned it with a letter telling me  
the verse exhibited a "delightful imagination"  
but the prose was "too concerned with self"

I stayed up all night drinking  
and as the sun rose from behind the mountains  
I hauled out the typewriter  
and tapped out a response to this professional

it was a rather nasty and defensive piece and  
after i read it a few times  
i discarded it and  
wrote another  
less angry  
more patronizing in tone  
i went to bed in the sunlight

when i awoke some hours later  
i read what i had written to the pro  
it was still too defensive  
not really what i wanted to say  
so i pitched it  
and wrote a third reply



i thanked him for reading my work  
and told him i was sorry he didn't "get it"  
i disputed some of what he had said  
about "tradition" and "heritage"  
(didn't tradition begin somewhere?)  
and the place of "self" in my work

but i was still on the defensive  
so the third attempt went in the shit can  
with the rest

i still don't know quite what i want to say  
to the professional poet  
so i am writing this now  
hoping something will emerge  
that's how i write

but i guess i don't really have much to say  
to this guy  
that wasn't in the writing i sent him  
except maybe  
"delightful" has nothing to do with it  
"self" quite a bit to do with it  
and running your own press  
everything to do with it

PROBABLY THE BEST FRIEND I EVER HAD

the trusty little cat  
swipes at you  
with a fish  
in his mouth  
he knows you're  
routine  
a master  
in name only

he likes to eat  
almost as much  
as you do  
that's why  
you think  
he loves you

— Scott Schafer

Port Angeles WA/ Portland OR